DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 186 174 RC 012 004

AUTHOR Lockart, Barbetta L.
TITLE Community Education and the Urban Indian.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the New Mexico State Community Education Conference (Las Cruces, NM, April 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Acculturation; Adult Learning; American Indian Education; *American Indians; *Community Centers; *Community Education; Cultural Activities; Cultural Awareness; Ethnicity; Lifelong Learning; *Needs; Nonschool Educational Programs; *Self Help Programs; Social Differences; Social Influences; Social Services; *Urban American Indians; Urban Areas

ABSTRACT

Because the circumstances and problems of the urban American Indian are unique and are not being met by public education and service agencies, urban Indians across the nation have joined together within their communities and taken steps to help address their special social, educational, cultural, economic, and political needs. The establishment of Indian centers offering such services as health clinics, drug and alcohol programs, GED courses, birth control clinics, baby clinics, language classes, day care centers, recreation programs, cultural activities, housing and job assistance is one method Indian people have utilized to help themselves. Educational services including tutoring programs, counseling, and textbook review committees have been provided by some community centers to supplement school district programs in an effort to more adequately prepare students for participation in the dominant society while allowing them to maintain their Indian identity. Community centers can also help urban Indians maintain their culture by providing facilities for the display of Indian arts and crafts. Each center is unique, but they all offer Indians, many of whom are new to the urban setting, a place where they can relax, stabilize, and feel the security of meeting other Indian people who have similar problems and needs. These centers may be funded through HEW (Indian monies), philanthropists, community education monies, or any number of sources. (NEC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED186174

Community Education and the Urban Indian

Presented at

New Mexico State Community Education Conference

April 1980

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Barbetta L. Lockart

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Barbetta L. Lockart
New Mexico State University
Box 3AC
Las Cruces, NM 88003

RC 012004

Abstract

Community education is being utilized by citizens throughout the nation who have concerns which are not being met by other agencies (public education, health and welfare organizations, etc.). Urban Indian people are among those citizens who have developed community education programs in order to address special needs and concerns. Such programs can be found throughout the United States in such cities as San Diego and Palm Springs, (California) and Albuquerque (New Mexico). In these and other cities, Indian people have established Indian centers, supplemental education programs, and cultural organizations, all developing from the community education philosophy which promotes community involvement and lifelong learning.

Community Education and the Urban Indian

The many forms of community education have helped people all over the country identify and meet varying needs: more appropriate educational experiences for children and adults, the development of special programs for teenagers and the elderly, work-study programs, and so on. One group that has utilized the community education philosophy is the urban Indian. Because the circumstances and problems of the urban Indian are unique, and are not being met by public education and service agencies, urban Indian people across the nation have joined together within their communities and taken steps to help address their special social, educational, cultural, economic and political needs.

Indian people who find themselves in the city for the first time, and even those who have been in an urban setting for a long period, often find the city a confusing and difficult environment. For example, if the Indian person has come from a reservation setting, he may be used to BIA, Public Health Service, and tribal agencies taking care of many of his educational, health, housing, legal, and economic needs, and he may be unaware of the necessity of dealing with utility companies, public schools, medical personnel. The demands and pace of the city are different from life on the reservation, and the values of non-Indian society are not only different from, but often contradictory to, Indian values. Language may be yet another problem for some Indian people: they may not speak English, speaking instead their tribal language. The result of the immersion of Indian people in such a different environment is very often culture shock and anomie. Many Indian people have

recognized these and other problems, and have turned to community education in an effort to alleviate some of the stress of city living.

Special Needs

Indian Centers

The establishment of Indian centers is one method Indian people have utilized to help themselves. Indian centers can be political and/or social, and serve a multitude of other purposes as well. San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Riverside, San Bernadino, Chicago, Boston, Albuquerque, and many other cities have Indian centers and organizations of one sort or another. These centers may be funded through HEW (Indian monies), philanthropists, community education monies, or any number of sources. Each center is unique, but they all offer the relocatees a place where they can relax, stabilize, and feel the security of meeting other Indian people who have similar problems; these centers have been created by Indian people, for Indian people (Ablon, 1972, p. 421). Through them, the Indian community has tried to help address at least some of the needs of other urban Indian people. Many centers offer health clinics, drug and alcohol programs, GED courses, birth control clinics, baby clinics, language classes, day care centers, recreation programs, cultural activities, housing and job assistance. The Indian community did this, not the public schools, not the service agencies, not the BIA.

For example, San Francisco has a large Indian population with a variety of needs. The following is just a partial list of the Indian organizations that help provide services and lifelong learning opportunities for Indians,

and in some instances, for non-Indians:

American Indian Center

American Indian Baptist Church

Santa Fe Indian Village

American Indian Council of Santa Clara County

American Indian Council of the Bay Area

Haskell Institute Alumni

Intertribal Fellowship House

Four Winds Club

San Jose Dance Club

American Indian Alcoholics Anonymous

American Indian Youth Council of the Bay Area

Indian Baseball and Basketball Teams (Ablon, 1972, p. 418)

Not all these groups are funded with designated community education monies, but many or all are comprised of community members who recognized community needs, set goals and objectives, and designed and implemented programs. They have stepped in and supplemented services offered by public education and public agencies.

Education

The public school system is another area where Indian people's special needs cannot always be addressed, and where community education can be employed to the benefit of all students and community members: Indian and non-Indian. For example, the Indian community of Palm Springs, California decided that the schools were not addressing the educational and cultural needs of the Indian children in the area. As a result of this belief,

community members formed committees and assisted the school district in writing a proposal to be submitted to Washington, D.C. for funding under the Indian Education Act of 1972. The proposal was funded, and the Indian Education Project became part of the school district services. The project suffered its share of growing pains, but is getting healthier each year; the Indian community is working to see that it remains healthy. The project involves the non-Indian community as often as possible within certain federal constraints, and it can be safely said that the Indian people are not the only ones learning from this effort in community education. Palm Springs' efforts are not unique: the entire geographic area is surrounded by Indian populations, and each group has Indian programs in existence.

It should be remembered that it is not only Indian children who may have special educational needs. Mexican, Black, Jewish, foreign students, girls, and the handicapped and learning disabled, to name just a few, have special educational needs that are sometimes not adequately met by the public school system. Whether the reason for this is lack of funds or a lack of trained personnel and materials, the situation must be rectified, and community education can help to do so. The Palm Springs Indian Education Project has accepted the challenge and responsibility of supplementing the education provided Indian students by the school district in an effort to more adequately prepare the students for participation in the dominant society, while allowing them to maintain their Indian identity.

What then has community education done to help Indian children and adults succeed in school and in the world? The Palm Springs project staff set up tutoring programs utilizing certified teachers; Indian students have access

to a counselor who is interested in them and in their culture; project staff makes referrals to agencies in the area when appropriate; project personnel help students and parents with employment whenever possible. The project offers Indian students, Indian community members, and non-Indians the opportunity for rap and share sessions, thus providing outlets for communication among ethnic groups. Additionally, Indian parents and students are involved in textbook review committees whose emphasis is on bringing into the schools textbooks and supplemental materials which present an accurate account of the role of Indian people in the historical and current development of the United States.

Although Palm Springs is only one school district where community developed Indian education is operating, there are many others. Similar programs (Title IV and Johnson O'Malley) exist in Orange County, Hemet, Indio, Los Angeles, San Diego (California), and Albuquerque (New Mexico). All these Indian programs and the countless others across the nation have had input from the local Indian community beginning with the early developmental stages and continuing through the present. Changes in focus or content of the programs are made according to community needs and desires, feasibility, and federal constraints. Without community involvement these programs would flounder, and cease to serve the very people for and by whom they were developed.

Cultural Maintenance

The American Indian has been misrepresented and devalued throughout the history of the United States. Unfortunately, this systematic devaluation continues today: films, television, books, advertising, newspapers, and anti-Indian groups continue to do injustice to Indian people and their heritage.

Although this devaluation is certainly not always carried out maliciously, the effects are devastating. At least one method of combating these effects is through the maintenance of culture. The reservation Indian has a much easier time preserving his culture and traditions than does the urban Indian: tradition and ceremonies surround him and are a part of everyday life. The urban Indian, on the other hand, does not come into contact with Indian culture and tradition in the same way Indian people on reservations do. As a result, the urban Indian must strive to maintain his/her culture while being immersed in the culture of the dominant society.

Community education programs can help urban Indians maintain their culture by providing facilities for the display of Indian arts and crafts, pow wow grounds, practice halls for Indian dance and drum groups, and meeting rooms where Indian issues can be discussed. These facilities are often provided through Indian centers and other Indian programs. These centers and programs offer the urban Indian a cultural refuge.

Special supplemental Indian education programs (developed at least in part through community education efforts) offer perfect opportunities for cultural experiences and the maintenance of Indian culture. Many of these cultural experiences are not just for Indian people; the non-Indian community can be involved as well. In Palm Springs, for example, monthly cultural evenings spotlighted a particular tribe, and an entire program was developed around that tribe, including Indian foods, songs, and dances. These programs met with great success among both the non-Indian and Indian communities, and attendance was very high. A great deal of sharing and learning go on at this type of activity, and fears and stereotypes are often dispelled. These types

of activities are fine opportunities for community based education to really work. In addition, some colleges and universities offer Indian studies programs, and these classes are usually taught by members of the Indian communities in that specific area: San Diego State University, University of California at San Diego, and Los Angeles, and University of New Mexico offer such courses.

Indian oriented community education can also help provide protection for American Indian culture and heritage. The Santa Barbara Center of Community Education and Citizen Participation is an organization that has been instrumental in helping Indian community members establish the Santa Barbara Indian Center. It has provided technical assistance, developmental guidance, and other means of support to the Indian community. Through this assistance, the Indian center has been able to organize, and has become recognized and respected in the area. For example, the Center has been involved in a legal struggle with the Western Liquified Natural Gas Company over the rights to sacred Indian land. Although there are laws and groups (e.g., Native American Heritage Commission) that protects Indian lands, big business will continue to defy the laws unless groups like the Santa Barbara Indian Center take a stand and fight. With the help of the Santa Barbara Center of Community Education, the Indian Center and community members (Indian and non-Indian) continue to work together to protect something of extreme importance to Indian people (deGroot, 1978, pp. 1 & 13).

This is only one example of this type of cultural protection that has come about through community action and education. Humboldt, California's Indian community, has had a confrontation with another big business over the

desecration and destruction of sacred burial sites. Indians in Milwaukee have utilized empty federal buildings that are on Indian land and set up community schools and alcoholic half-way houses (Bigart, 1973, p. 279). Although these efforts have met with varying degrees of success, they still remain examples of what can be done when communities work together to improve their circumstances.

Community education is one vehicle that Indian people have utilized to provide themselves with social and cultural experiences, supplemental educational programs, and economic and political protection. The many forms of community education are working in urban Indian communities and will continue to do so in the future: they are the result of Indian people caring, sharing, learning, and growing together.

References

Ablon, J. Relocated Indians in San Francisco. In H. M. Bahr, B. A. Chadwick and R. C. Days (Eds.). Native Americans today: Sociological perspectives. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

Bigart, H. Militancy of urban Indians. In Winston Press (Eds.). Viewpoints: Red, yellow, black, and brown. Minneapolis: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1973.

deGroot, J. Standing firm, the Indian center of Santa Barbara. Citizen Action in Education, Sept. 1978, 5(3), pp. 1 & 13.